

**Lake Winnebago
Inter-Agency Regulation Meeting Minutes
26 October 2005**

1. **Introduction.** The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), Detroit District held its annual inter-agency regulation meeting at the Radisson Paper Valley Hotel in Appleton, Wisconsin. Mr. Michael O'Bryan, Chief of Engineering and Technical Services for the USACE, called the meeting to order at approximately 9:10 a.m.
2. **Attendees.** A list of attendees is included at the end of the minutes
3. **Presentation of the agenda.** Mr. O'Bryan opened the meeting with introductory remarks and self-introduction of all attendees. He then summarized the meeting agenda, which included information on the basin, a discussion on basin conditions for 2004, a briefing on the 2004-2005 water level strategy, and presentation of the 2005-2006 regulation strategy. In addition, Mr. O'Bryan discussed the many benefits that competing uses gain from the regulation of Lake Winnebago. Benefits included recreational boating, flood control, hydropower, municipal water supply, environmental and riparian interests. Mr. O'Bryan also discussed decreased staffing issues at the Fox River Sub Office. He assured everyone that the USACE is committed to operating the gates and regulating the watershed in a safe and efficient manner. The presentation followed with Mr. Bob Stanick, Mr. Keith Kompoltowicz and Mr. Phillip Ross each discussing their areas of expertise.
4. **Lake Winnebago basin and controls.** Mr. Stanick described the watershed, depicted the drainage basin on a map and explained data collection platforms (DCP) and controls at Neenah and Menasha.
 - (a) **Fox/Wolf River basin.** The 6, 430 square mile Fox-Wolf River basin was described. Locations of the 10 DCP's, including the 4 DCP's on Lake Winnebago and 1 DCP on Lake Poygan were noted and a brief explanation of the data they collect was offered. It was pointed out that they provide invaluable information for use in regulation activities on Lake Winnebago and the rest of the Fox-Wolf system.
 - (b) **Lake Winnebago Controls.** The federal dam at Menasha and the private dam at Neenah were shown to be the only control points for outflow from Lake Winnebago. Flows released from these two dams discharge into the head of the Lower Fox River. Mr. Stanick explained how his crew operates the 6 gates at the Menasha dam while Neenah Paper operates the 14 gates on the dam in Neenah, WI under direction of the USACE. Pictures showing the Menasha dam with gates both opened and closed were compared. Mr. Stanick explained how to tell if a gate is open or closed by looking at the control structures. He also noted the spillway and explained that the elevation of the crest of the spillway is approximately at 1.7 feet on the Oshkosh Datum. He also explained that there are

no gates that control flow over the spillway. Flow over the spillway is dependant on the water level of Lake Winnebago.

(c) Construction Season 2005. Mr. Stanick described repairs made at the Upper Appleton Dam in the summer of 2005. Repairs included the resurfacing of a leaking retaining wall and installation of a hand rail for safety. He shared photos of the project both pre and post construction.

5. Basin Conditions. Mr. Keith Kompoltowicz reviewed basin conditions for the 2004-2005 regulation period. He began with early spring showing graphics demonstrating the rapid snow melt experienced in late March. He also reviewed precipitation records for the previous year noting that only two of the past twelve months have had above average precipitation. Mr. Kompoltowicz revisited weather conditions from the spring/summer of 2004 and compared them with spring/summer 2005. It was shown that the spring/summer of 2004 was much wetter than spring/summer 2005. He showed several graphics depicting this year's drought conditions pointing out significant features of the drought including Governor Jim Doyle's declaration of a state-wide drought emergency on July 15th. He ended the discussion on basin conditions by comparing the drought of 2005 and its average summer time water levels with previous droughts over the past 25 years and their respective water levels. It was shown that 2005 water levels faired well when compared to past drought events.

6. Lake Winnebago Water Levels 2004/2005. Mr. Phil Ross recapped lake levels for the 2004/2005 regulation season and pointed out various factors and competing uses affecting gate openings and closings. He began his review with the U.S. Geologic Survey's (USGS) request in October 2004 for increased flows for bed load measurements. He explained that the USACE was able to accommodate this request because excess water was stored on the lake. Other highlights included:

(a) The 2004 Drawdown began around the second week in January to allow for the formation of a stable ice cover. Mr. Stanick explained the necessity of such ice cover to minimize problems associated with frazzle ice. Frazzle ice can clog power generation equipment and hinder gate movements.

(b) Drawdown ended at the end of March reaching a level of 1.53 feet. Refill began on March 30th.

(c) Rapid snowmelt required the opening of several gates to accommodate rapid inflow of water.

(d) By mid to late April gates were closed to stay within regulation targets. However, all gates could not be closed at this time because of a request by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) to maintain a minimum flow of 4,000 cfs at the Depere Dam for sturgeon spawning and incubation.

- (e) The USACE kept close communication with the USFWS during the month of May. This resulted in a coordinated effort to close all gates by June 1st, a half month earlier than originally requested by the USFWS. This coordination allowed sturgeon spawning to occur with minimal impact due to gate changes while allowing the USACE to bring water levels up to summer navigation targets on Lake Winnebago.
- (f) Water levels peaked on June 15th at 3.05 feet Oshkosh Datum.
- (g) All gates at Menasha and Neenah remained closed from the end of June through the remainder of the navigation season.

7. **Questions and General Discussion.** Mr. Bill Hitchcock of Windpointe Harbor asked why the USACE continues to target a level between 2.4 and 2.7 by the first of May when the target used to be 3.0 by May first. Mr. Ross explained that in order to protect aquatic vegetation and maintain adequate flood control, water levels need to be maintained at 2.7 in the early spring and allowed to rise gradually to summer target levels. Levels above 2.7 in the early spring can be detrimental to the growth of aquatic vegetation, which is important to the overall health of the system. To accomplish this, an operating band of 0.3 feet needs to be used to handle quick rises in water levels that frequently occur in spring due to rapidly developing storms and snowmelt. The 0.3 operating band is designed to balance environmental needs with navigation needs.

Mr. Techlow quoted from Technical Bulletin 182 Department of Natural Resources, Madison, Wisconsin 1993 that the DNR's recommendation for protection of aquatic vegetation would be to maintain lower average spring/summer Lake Winnebago water levels (2.25 to 2.5 Oshkosh datum) and to incorporate periodic partial drawdowns for periods of two to three years to simulate drought conditions. It was pointed out that this recommendation would be unacceptable due to navigation interests. The current USACE regulation plan insures a balance is maintained between environmental and navigation needs.

Mr. Jack Nelson acknowledged the good aquatic plant growth this year, but suggested all gates be closed earlier due to the drought conditions that were developing. Ms. Marie Strum of the USACE replied that the maximum number of gates were closed as soon as possible in response to drought conditions. However, some gates had to remain open to allow sufficient flow for sturgeon spawning below the Depere dam. Through coordination with the USFWS the USACE was able to close all gates sooner than expected to accommodate both environmental as well as navigation needs. Ms. Strum mentioned that this is a good example of the balancing act the USACE needs to maintain on the Fox/Wolf River system.

Ms. Gloria Nelson stated that a large problem boaters have on the system is inadequate depth for boating due to lower water levels and shoaling. A representative from the Calumet County Land and Water Conservation pointed out that wetland

restoration projects help the entire ecosystem, boaters included. Wetlands help trap sediment from flowing into the lakes, thereby reducing dredge quantities. Furthermore, lower water levels along with healthy wetlands reduce shoreline erosion by reducing the amount of wave energy reaching the shoreline. This provides a cleaner water column, which more than 200,000 people rely on as a source of drinking water.

It was pointed out during the discussion that control of the lake was lost by the end of May. Ms. Strum concurred. The USACE closed all gates for the summer navigation season and water levels continued to drop.

A concern about decreased staffing at the Fox River Sub Office was voiced. Mr. O'Bryan provided details of the operation plan. The Fox River office staff will be supplemented with staff from the Kewaunee office when needed. Mr. O'Bryan also stated that the operation of the gates, regulation of the watershed, and the safety of all involved in managing the system will not be compromised.

8. **Adjourned.** Meeting is adjourned at 10:50 am.

Attendees

Michael Arrowood	Walleyes for Tomorrow
Jim Schommer	Walleyes for Tomorrow
Sue Palermo	Appleton Yacht Club
Gloria Nelson	WisBoat
Tom Donnelly	WisBoat
Eric Fowle	ECWRPC
Walt Raith	ECWRPC
Tim Johnson	Water Board Warrior's
Joel Schweitzer	Lake Poygan Sportsman Club
Jack Nelson	Fox River Navigation System Authority
Steve Brand	City of Oshkosh
Skip Palermo	Appleton Yacht Club
Kay Wickeit	Oshkosh Boat Club
Betty Carr	Oshkosh Boat Club
Ken Jesion	Oshkosh Boat Club
Jeff Feldt	Kaukana Utilities
John Olson	Lake Poygan Sportsman Club
Cliff Kruger	Lake Poygan Sportsman Club
Representative	Oshkosh Boat Club
Melissa Kok	U.S. Representative Petri's Office
Eugene McLeod	Calumet Land and Water Conservation
Tom Davies	Winnebago County LWCD

Dean Kaperabek	Winnebago County LWCD
Brian Hahn	National Weather Service-Sullivan
Ron Van Deltz	Fox River Navigation Authority
Lee Hartves	Lake Poygan Sportsman Club
Dan Lucas	Lake Resident
Tom Wilson	Lake Poygan Sportsman Club
Ron Koepler	Lake Poygan Sportsman Club
Nile Sweet	Friends of the Fox
Jackson Medley	
Rob McLennan	DNR-Oshkosh
Bill Hitchcock	Windpointe Harbor, Winneconne
Harlan Kiesow	Fox River Navigation System Authority
James Gryzwa	
Chad Cook	University of Wisconsin Extension
Scott Cevigney	WE Energies
Tim DeGroat	High Cliff Yacht Club
Cherrie DeGroat	High Cliff Yacht Club
Tom Konrad	City of Oshkosh
Rob Elliot	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Harold Miller	HWR
Mark Szczepanik	Thilmany LLC
Bob Beckstrom	Citizen
Frank Krueger	Neenah Paper
Lee Storch	Neenah Paper
Jeff Christensen	Radtke Contractors
Don Gilson	Water Board Warriors
Tom Piette	Thilmany LLC
Bob Stark	Friends of the Fox
Dick Koerner	Congress
Randy Rutton	
Jim Wydeven	WE Energies
Junior Lee Patt	
Leslie Taylor	Winnebago Lakes Council
Ron Kelbert	Oshkosh Boat Club
Bruce Gomm	Kaukana Utilities
Steve Kohel	Land Owner
Repersentative	U.S. Senator Fiengold's office
Dave Foster	US Army Corps of Engineers
Bob Stanick	US Army Corps of Engineers
Joe Kalies	US Army Corps of Engineers
Dave Haefs	US Army Corps of Engineers
Michael O'Bryan	US Army Corps of Engineers
Marie Strum	US Army Corps of Engineers
Phil Ross	US Army Corps of Engineers
Keith Kompoltowicz	US Army Corps of Engineers
Tim Calappi	US Army Corps of Engineers